



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

NOV 30 2007

Ms Beth Mathews
Chair, Alaska Scientific Review Group
University of Alaska Southeast
Natural Sciences Department
11120 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Ms. Mathews:

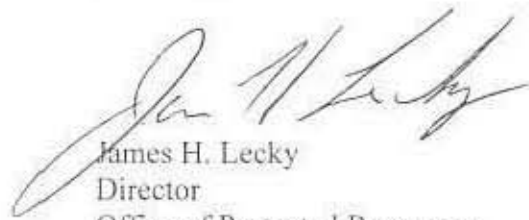
Thank you for your letter to Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, transmitting a recommendation from the Alaska Scientific Review Group regarding stock structure of harbor seals in Alaska. Your letter was forwarded to my office for response because the Office of Protected Resources is the office within NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) responsible for implementation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

NMFS is aware of the scientific evidence supporting new stock identities of harbor seals in Alaska and of the peer review the related documentation has received. We share your opinion that harbor seals remain important resources for Alaska Natives. Accordingly, NMFS is working with the Alaska Native Harbor Seal Commission to re-align harbor seal stock structure through the co-management process.

For a number of reasons, progress within the Harbor Seal Co-management Committee was delayed in 2006 and 2007. My office expects that the remaining concerns can be resolved in FY 2008, and harbor seal stock identity can be updated soon thereafter.

I appreciate your interest and review of information related to harbor seals and other marine mammals in Alaska and look forward to your continued support in the conservation of our living marine resources.

Sincerely,


James H. Lecky
Director
Office of Protected Resources

